

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber
Statement by Mr. Logar, Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the United Nations.

I would like to thank the Nigerian presidency for convening the meeting and organizing this timely discussion. My appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

I also align myself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network. Allow me to add a few thoughts from our national perspective.

Slovenia traditionally pays special attention to the empowerment of women and the protection and promotion of their rights. As has been recalled many times, the protection and advancement of women's rights is of key importance for stability, sustainable peace and prosperity at all levels.

On the other hand, armed conflict and instability often disproportionately affect women. In times of instability, violence against women, including sexual violence, increases. It is therefore important to include women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts as well as post-conflict recovery and reconciliation.

Furthermore, sexual violence is used in conflict as a weapon of war to humiliate and injure victims, their families and entire communities, and often continues after the conflict has ended. Victims, not just women and girls but also men and boys, are traumatized and stigmatized forever. Those heinous acts remain vivid in the recollections of whole communities for generations, as we are reminded by the legacy of conflict in the Western Balkans and Rwanda. Such acts should not be repeated and must be stopped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Syria, Mali and Somalia and in other situations of concern at the present time.

We should not forget that sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict and post-conflict situations is not only committed by members of the parties to the conflict, but also by United Nations personnel. Therefore, we welcome the developments in applying the United Nations zero-tolerance policy in certain situations on the Council's agenda. We call on the Council to include all aspects of the policy in all resolutions renewing or establishing peacekeeping mandates. It is important that the United Nations set an example by practicing it preaches.

Although the commitment to accountability and the fight against impunity regarding sexual violence in conflict has been reiterated many times — again in today's discussion — and enshrined in Council resolution 2106 (2013), there are many obstacles to ensuring perpetrators' accountability and access to justice for victims of sexual crimes in conflict.

All of the issues mentioned were also raised at the third seminar of the Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean Region, held in Slovenia last month on the topic of promoting a culture of mediation and prevention in the Mediterranean, where the need to put the issue of sexual violence in conflict at the top of the agenda was highlighted.

The Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court play an important part in upholding accountability for perpetrators and the fight against impunity. Their role should be seen as an important element in establishing peace and security and the rule of law. We would also like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Justice Rapid Response Initiative and the UN-Women sexual and gender-based violence justice expert roster in assisting the international community and affected countries through their expertise in addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

We believe that the primary responsibility for the prosecution of conflict-related crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, lies with States. In that regard, allow me to recall the initiative of Slovenia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Argentina to consider the possibility of adopting a new international instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition aimed at effective investigation and prosecution, by domestic jurisdictions, of the crimes that are of the most serious concern internationally.